

Ghost Battalion Leads Fight in Fallujah

By Spc. Erik LeDrew
122nd MPAD

FALLUJAH, Iraq -- The Ghost Battalion's mission: pave the way into Fallujah and secure the last insurgent stronghold in Iraq. On the night of Nov. 8, Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment of the 1st Cavalry Division descended in droves and pushed their way into Fallujah securing the city, and spearheading the mission for the 1st Marine Expeditionary Force.

"Our mission was to penetrate the enemy defenses in Fallujah to allow for two Marine [regimental combat teams] to enter the city," said Maj. Scott Jackson, executive officer, 2-7 Cav.

The famous Ghost Battalion cemented its place in the history of the war in Iraq, and has been central to success in Baghdad and Najaf prior to becoming the main effort in Fallujah. Based on its prior track record, it is apparent the Ghost Battalion was the Marine's battalion of choice.

"The 1st Marine Division specifically asked for us because of our reputation," said 1st Sgt. Larry Hudnall, first sergeant for Company C, 2-7 Cav. "And Marines never specifically ask for a unit's help."

As the Air Force was busy bombarding the city and weakening the insurgent

defenses, 2-7 Cav. started staging their Bradley Armored Fighting Vehicles, Abrams tanks and armored personnel carriers ready to take the fight to the streets.

The Ghost Battalion began their assault on Fallujah just after 7 p.m.

Under the cover of darkness, three companies from 2-7 Cav. breached insurgent defenses by plowing through a railway station on the outskirts of Fallujah's Joulwan district.

The Soldiers secured the railway station and pushed into the city, continuing their fight while artillery, mortars and air assets continued pounding other parts of the city.

According to Jackson, after the Ghost troopers completed their initial mission by successfully securing a major thoroughfare into Fallujah, the 2-7 Cav. Soldiers continued to push further into the city, conducting operations to destroy the insurgents.

"We've been doing screening missions along [a main thoroughfare], patrolling it in order to allow the battalion access to its objectives in the city," Hudnall, a Killeen, Texas native, said. "We've also been doing mounted combat patrols in our sector, or what we call 'gun runs,' which allow us to get assessments of enemy positions in our sector."

In addition to the damage that was done by the battalion's Bradleys and tanks, the 2-7 infantry troops had to dismount to search and clear buildings and houses, as well as to engage the enemy on foot.

"Our guys are doing a great job in the fight," Jackson said. "They've certainly handed-out more than they were given."

By Nov. 12, insurgents were surrendering in droves, waving improvised white flags. Elements of the new Iraqi military were escorted into the city to clear all of the houses and buildings and were also tasked to apprehend the countless insurgent detainees.

"It's a good thing that we're getting all of these [insurgents] out of here," said Spc. Michael Haggerty, Comanche Co., 2-7 Cav., and a Cape May, N.J. native. "This is the last insurgent stronghold in Iraq, so the country will be much better off after this city is secured."



Photo by Spc. Erik LeDrew, 122nd MPAD

Spc. Rene Romain, Comanche Co., 2-7 Cav., 1st Cav. Div., carries an old machine gun captured in a raid on an insurgent's house in Fallujah, Nov. 11. Soldiers found several rocket-propelled grenades, a Dragunov sniper rifle, a bag of grenades and a suitcase filled with passports and other items during the raid.

By the end of the first week of the fight, the majority of the city had been overtaken by either 2-7 Cav. or the Marine regiments that entered Fallujah in the Ghost Battalion's wake.

Hudnall said it is still too early to determine if the overall operation was a complete success.

"This is the last great battle in Iraq," Hudnall said. "I really think our level of success here in Fallujah will be determined in the future, when they hold their own elections."



1st Sgt. Larry Hudnall (left), Spc. Rene Romain (middle) and Sgt. Montgomery Hesler (right), all with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cav. Div., take defensive positions after taking fire while searching and clearing houses in Fallujah Nov. 10.

Soldiers Face Mortar Attack on 'Quiet' Mission

By Sgt. Christina Rockhill
1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

CAMP AI-ISTIQLAL (INDEPENDANCE), Iraq -- The troops crammed into the back of the Bradley fighting vehicle, shoulder to shoulder. As the hatch closed shutting out the light of mid-day, their faces held a mixture of anticipation and nervousness. The Bradley started moving and Spc. Matt Nichols made the sign of the cross.

"Do you always do that," Staff Sgt. Justin Mallery yelled over the loud noise of the Bradley.

"Always. Always," Nicholson mouthed.

The troops were heading to a relatively quiet area of Haifa Street, where they would be on a reconnaissance mission, scoping out the neighborhood for any insurgent activity.

"We're just observing today," Mallery said. "We hope if they see us out here, it will disrupt whatever they're doing in sector."

The Soldiers of Charlie 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment are more than used to a little action. They routinely patrol the volatile Haifa Street. Mallery said nearly every one of his Soldiers has received a Purple Heart.

The Bradley pulled up to a building. This particular building had been the target of many attacks and was vacant except for a few Iraqi workers, who were repairing damage from



By Sgt. Christina Rockhill, 1st Cav. Div. Public Affairs

Sgt. Brian Haiku, Company C, 1st Battalion, 9th Cavalry Regiment, scans his sector during a reconnaissance mission on Haifa Street in Baghdad. Haiku and his fellow Soldiers were attacked with a mortar on the rooftop, but miraculously no one was injured.

the last attack. The Bradley's hatch opened, and the Soldiers ran inside the building, looking from room to room, climbing floor after floor before finally settling on the roof.

The Soldiers set up hasty-firing positions using old metal bookshelves that had seen better days. Small-arms fire echoed in the distance.

"Keep your heads down," Mallery ordered. "They could just be trying to get our heads up."

The Soldiers remained intent on their sectors, scanning for sniper pockets or anything out of the ordinary. Mallery said even a slight disruption in traffic around the area could mean an attack was

imminent.

The Soldiers are aware of the danger and even though it is a less volatile area of Haifa Street, it is far from safe.

"This is one of the quieter areas of Haifa Street," Mallery said. "It's normal for us to only take one or two grenades on a mission out here. It's a shock if it doesn't happen."

The long drawn out whistle of a mortar is heard nearby. The Soldiers freeze in place.

"Get down. Get down," Mallery shouted.

The Soldiers crouched close to the walls of the roof and tucked their chins to their chests. The mortar impacted the center of the roof about 15 feet from the troops.

After it was apparent that a second mortar was not going to impact, the Soldiers scrambled to their feet and rushed toward the stairwell, hugging the walls and staying low.

"They had eyes on us," Mallery said. "They knew we were here. They even had time to aim."

The Soldiers rushed down the stairs and rested against a safe piece of wall. Small-arms fire erupted closer this time. Miraculously, no one was injured in the attack.

Pfc. William Jones who has only been in Iraq for two weeks was standing right where the mortar hit only moments before the impact.

"I wouldn't still be here if you didn't tell me to move," he said to Mallery. "At least it was only one."

The Soldiers maintained security of the building waiting for signs of an ambush or a secondary mortar attack. Mallery radioed down to the waiting Bradleys as the Soldiers prepared to evacuate the building.

Shots rang from nearby and the Soldiers rushed from the building and climbed into the Bradleys.

The hatch closed behind the troops, and they sighed with relief, finally able to catch their breath. The Bradley roared away, and Nichols made the sign of the cross. His prayer had worked again and the troops smiled, ready to be home after a "quiet" mission.

Useful Iraqi Words/Phrases

Where are the toilets?
ayn al-Hammaamaat?

Wednesday

High: 76
Low: 61



Thursday

High: 75
Low: 62



Friday

High: 79
Low: 59



Weather information provided by 1CD Staff Weather Office (SWO)

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News Notes

Woman Wants Money, Gets Jail

BATH, N.Y. (AP) -- A woman spiked her elderly neighbor's apple strudel cake with medicine after learning the 82-year-old man was going to include her in his will, authorities said. "Luckily, he noticed the pills in the strudel before he got more than a bite or two of it." Clark, 26, was originally charged with attempted assault. But under an agreement with prosecutors, she is expected to plead guilty Nov. 22 to reckless endangerment, which carries up to six years in prison.

Man Injured in Fight with a Deer

NORTH VERNON, Ind. (AP) -- When hunter Jim Mick went into the woods to bag himself a deer, he never expected to come out empty-handed - and badly bruised. The 69-year-old bowhunter was treated for injuries he said he suffered during a wrestling match with an angry buck. Mick said the deer attacked him Monday while he was hunting alone in southeastern Indiana. "He came out of the tall grass and briars," said Mick. "When I realized it, he was on me already." Mick said the animal, which weighed about 150 pounds, struck him in the chest and knocked him to the ground, goring him in the thigh. After about a 10-minute struggle, Mick said he managed to put a tree between himself and the deer, and the animal retreated.



Abilene Reporter-News

Ariana Vasquez, left, Marc Valentine, center, and Kris Southward were among the eight contestants in a pie-eating contest Saturday in Abilene, Texas to raise money for the local Meals on Wheels.

Four-Footed Critics Give Mixed Reviews

SEATTLE (*Seattle Times*) -- In the fine tradition of pretending animals are really just like us, clever humans have created videos and DVDs designed to stimulate and entertain pets while we're away, replacing their real favorite activities of napping and destruction while alleviating owner guilt.

At the risk of turning them into the same glassy-eyed TV addicts we've become, we tried out several titles on our own pack, starting with the dogs. After several tries, we wrangled them into a proper TV-watching tableau and popped in the first video, "Entertaining Jake."

From the first bark, Buddy was transfixed, ears rotating like satellite dishes, head cocked curiously to one side.

He watched intently as dogs of all sorts cavorted across the screen, wrestling, swimming and chasing balls. Burt, Freeway and Buster ignored the TV, illustrating their indifference by napping or pursuing highly insulting grooming behavior.

After the dogs' lukewarm reaction, we didn't hold out much hope for the cats, who are



Seattle Times

Four-footed critics give mixed reviews to videos and DVDs meant to amuse cats and dogs. Despite the world's largest Pomeranian, it took a lot of prompting to get Buster, left, and Freeway to give "The Movie for Dogs" their full attention.

loathe to join in any organized family activity. Nonetheless, we dragged them from under the bed and plopped them in a favorite chair at eye level with the TV. "Couch Potato Kitty" started with peacefully twittering birds and scampering squirrels.

Maybe it was the fear that a TV-sized canary had come inside the house to kill them, but the cats promptly shot under a bookcase. The fish,

lizards and seagulls parading across the screen did little to interest these two, who seemed more intrigued by the sound the dogs were making in the next room.

Though it is difficult to quantify the results of testing on these six viewers, I think they'd all rate the experience as better than what the networks are offering this season, but well below finding a dead fish on the beach.

Eagles Embarrass Cowboys With Win

IRVING, Texas (AP) -- Donovan McNabb spun away from one would-be tackler and sprinted to his right, only to find another defender waiting. So he went back to his left, chased by two more players, and finally heaved the ball, letting loose a 60-yard pass that looked more like a punt.

From that amazing completion to Freddie Mitchell to three touchdown passes to Terrell Owens, McNabb and the Philadelphia Eagles resoundingly bounced back from their first loss to beat the Dallas Cowboys 49-21 Monday night.

McNabb was 15-of-28 for 345 yards, with four TD passes and no interceptions. He led Philadelphia (8-1) to six touchdowns over the first three quarters, then Lito Sheppard capped a historic night for both teams with a 101-yard interception for yet another score.

The Eagles scored 35 points in the first half - more than they'd scored in any game this season. They wound up with their most points since beating St. Louis 52-10 in



AP

Philadelphia Eagles quarterback Donovan McNabb (5) eludes Dallas Cowboys defender Leonardo Carson (91) on his way to throwing a 60 yard pass during the second quarter in Irving, Texas, Monday. The Eagles won 49-21.

1981.

"It takes a couple plays for us to get a little momentum," McNabb said. "Once things get going, we feel confident that every play that we call is going to be effective and possibly get in the end zone."

This one was historically ugly as Dallas gave up its most

points ever at home and its most anywhere since a 50-24 loss at Cincinnati in 1985. The Cowboys allowed four touchdowns in one quarter (the second) for the first time in franchise history and the 35 points Philadelphia scored in the first half tied another dubious record.

Race to Host 2012 Olympics Enters Final Lap

LONDON (AP) -- The five cities looking to host the 2012 Summer Games submitted bids to the International Olympic Committee on Monday, entering the final stage of a long process in hopes of landing one of the biggest prizes in sports.

Paris, the front-runner to win next year's vote, turned in documents, as did London, Madrid, New York and Moscow. Each book totals more than 550 pages, allowing the IOC to evaluate venues, security, transportation, hotels and financing.

The IOC evaluation commission travels to the candidate cities early next year, and will give its recommendations to the 100-plus IOC members a month before they vote by secret ballot in Singapore on July 6.

Paris has much of the infrastructure in place after



hosting soccer's World Cup in 1998.

"We are not overconfident but we feel, due to all the work and checking that has been done, we think we have put together the best of France," Paris 2012 spokesman Jerome Lenfant said.

London plans to regenerate a rundown area of east London, building an Olympic Park. London's bid also includes landmarks such as Wimbledon, the new Wembley Stadium and Hyde Park.

New York's bid is backed by U.S. Olympic Committee chairman Peter Ueberroth, who ran the 1984 Los Angeles

Olympics.

"This city offers an outstanding combination of marketing, financial and media power that can help the games achieve a new level of global prominence," Ueberroth said.

Madrid plans to host all 25 Olympic disciplines in three areas in close proximity, with 70 percent of the proposed infrastructure already built. The Spanish capital also sought help from organizers of the successful 1992 Barcelona Games.

Moscow's bid features venues along the Moscow River, historically the main artery of the 12th century city.

The IOC's 11-member evaluation commission will visit Madrid on Feb. 3-6, London on Feb. 16-19, New York on Feb. 21-24, Paris on March 9-12 and Moscow on March 14-17.

In Brief

Hanks May Star in Da Vinci Code

LOS ANGELES (AP) -- Will Tom Hanks crack "The Da



Vinci Code"? Director Ron Howard and producer Brian Grazer, the team behind

"A Beautiful Mind" and "Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas," said in Newsweek that they wanted the "Saving Private Ryan" star because of the cerebral nature of Dan Brown's best-selling novel. Hanks would play Robert Langdon, a Harvard symbologist who is in a life-or-death race with a secret society to uncover the secrets of the Holy Grail hidden in the works of Leonardo Da Vinci.

Spears Trys Her Hand at Poetry

(MSNBC) -- Britney Spears, fresh off her honeymoon with new hubby Kevin Federline, has written a poem to commemorate the epic event. Robert Frost she ain't: the belly-baring pop star rhymes "smilin'" with "island." A sample stanza from "Honeymoon Poem" which Spears has posted for fans: "A meal, a shower and some ice cream/Then I threw my man down, you know what I mean!" Meanwhile, rumors continue to swirl that Spears is pregnant - her spokeswoman continues to deny or hedge. Gossips are saying that's why she plans to take some time off from touring and that's why the former blonde has gone brunette: so the chemicals from the dye don't harm the baby.